



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF STATE



USAID
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TRANS-SAHARA COUNTERTERRORISM PARTNERSHIP (TSCTP)

U.S. FOREIGN ASSISTANCE PERFORMANCE PUBLICATION Fiscal Year 2009

FY 2009 FOREIGN ASSISTANCE GOALS

The United States Government (USG) and governments of North Africa share the same long-term vision of a stable, prosperous Maghreb region (Algeria, Morocco, Libya, and Tunisia) that acts as a responsible, productive regional partner and a bridge between Europe and the Middle East.

Unfortunately, terrorism in North Africa threatens efforts to develop, stabilize, and integrate the region. This increased terrorist threat became widely known when the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat and Al Qaeda agreed in 2007 to form Al Qaeda in the lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). AQIM has steadily increased the tempo and sophistication of its attacks in northern Algeria and Mauritania, and has demonstrated the ability to operate with relative impunity in several Sahelian countries.

The Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) strengthens the capacity of North African and northern Sahelian states to combat AQIM operations, activities, and ideology, and prevent AQIM from expanding its operational reach in sub-Saharan Africa. This interagency program mobilizes resources and expertise from the Department of State, the Department of Defense, and the U.S. Agency for International Development to assist host governments to improve their security services, extend effective government control over remote areas that terrorists use as safe havens, address underlying causes of radicalization, and increase the positive influence of moderate leaders with vulnerable populations. Despite cuts in FY 2009 USG spending necessitated by the global financial crisis, Congress has made TSCTP a priority for the first time by approving a line item for the program. While the funding granted is limited, it will enable TSCTP to provide university students in the region, who face a limited employment market, with useful work skills to better prepare them for the transition between school and the workplace, as well as provide rehabilitation and training opportunities for disenfranchised youth and vulnerable populations.

HIGHLIGHTS BY PROGRAM OBJECTIVE

Peace and Security –

The merger of Algeria's domestic terrorist group with Al Qaeda at the end of 2007, forming Al Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb, gives new impetus to USG interest in partnering with Algeria to fight global terrorism and prevent the spread of extremist ideologies throughout disenfranchised populations, including a growing number of young, unemployed men. The Government of Algeria has been steadfast in battling the threat of AQIM, but has found it difficult to counter the group's shift in tactics. Algeria's Government has also actively countered networks involved in recruiting and funneling Algerians wishing to fight in Iraq and Afghanistan, though recent evidence suggests that Algeria is perhaps the fourth-largest contributor of foreign fighters in Iraq.

Algeria's very large youth population (70 percent of the country is under the age of 30) and high unemployment (in excess of 30 percent) make youths dangerously vulnerable to extremist ideologies and recruitment by terrorist groups. Through TSCTP Economic Support funding in the categories of Counterterrorism, Delegitimizing Terrorist Ideology, Peace and Security, and Investing in People, targeted assistance will be provided to Algeria in the form of a university counter-radicalization program designed to ease the transition between the university and the workforce, fight unemployment, and train Algerian university students in English and Management, two skills key to securing meaningful employment in the Algeria of today and tomorrow. This program would help Algerian universities produce job creators and not simply job seekers. Other universities in Algeria would be considered for future linkages, as funding allows.

Mentouri University, located in Constantine, Algeria's third-largest city (and unofficial capital of eastern Algeria), has 80,000 students. Constantine and its universities are the center of Islamist study and thought in Algeria, and several university-linked networks of Islamist-driven foreign fighters destined for Iraq have been uncovered in the Constantine region over the past few years. The pilot counter-radicalization program at Mentouri University focuses on teacher training and workforce development. The Algerian Government has identified the former as an initiative that will have a significant secondary impact on a student population many times the size of the audience specifically targeted, and the latter as a measure to counter unemployment and the disenfranchisement it generates.

Constantine is not the only city where there is an established link between high unemployment among disenfranchised youth and terrorism. As funding allows, other universities would benefit from the program, not only in the capital city of Algiers, but also in regions where the USG has very little presence or reach: the Kabylie region (University of Bejaia) and the South (Universities of Biskra, Adrar, and Ouargla).

Peace and Security –

Morocco's overcrowded prison system is a fertile breeding ground for homegrown terrorism. The program will address the needs of both the Moroccan Government and the prison population by promoting stability, security, and training and rehabilitation opportunities. This activity will commence in FY 2010, and is anticipated to run for three years at a projected lifetime funding level of \$6,000,000. An estimated 11,000 youth (between the ages of 12 and 25) are currently incarcerated in Moroccan prisons, and compose roughly 20 percent of the estimated total prisoner population of 54,000. These youth are typically uneducated petty thieves or drug dealers who serve short sentences and are released back into society with no social assistance. Since recidivism in Morocco

tops 50 percent, without intervention, these youth are quite likely to return to the prison system. TSCTP funds will be used to provide marginalized youth, recently released young prisoners, and youth in prison in cities with large prisoner populations, including Casablanca and Sale, with much-needed psychosocial services to assist their re-entry into productive society, expanded technical training opportunities required to make them marketable, increased life skills training opportunities to complement technical training and to ensure their future success, and supportive monitoring and follow-up as they struggle to make the transition to a productive life. In addition, the funds will provide support to key Moroccan non-governmental organizations conducting advocacy work in the prison system with an eye towards promoting broader prison reform efforts. The end goal is a reduction in youth recidivism to below 30 percent, with over 50 percent of recently released youth finding meaningful employment in targeted cities.

Peace and Security –

The USG has provided limited criminal justice and security sector assistance to the Maghreb countries since 1990, in particular in the area of antiterrorism. Criminal justice and security sector assistance is broadly defined as assistance to law enforcement, prosecutorial services, customs and borders, counterterrorism units, counternarcotics units, judicial systems, and prisons.

The overall objective in the Maghreb is to create an environment that is inhospitable to terrorist and trafficking operations. USG assistance aims to develop criminal justice institutions able of detecting, deterring, investigating, prosecuting, and incarcerating members of transnational criminal organizations and networks. Commensurate with host country need and political will, TSCTP intends to place law enforcement experts in Maghreb countries capable of lending assistance to local law enforcement personnel on a day-to-day basis. These personnel will also help coordinate USG assistance with other international donors.

Using Non-proliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related programs (NADR) funds, Diplomatic Security will provide training through the Antiterrorism Assistance Office (ATA) on subjects identified as priorities for improving Algeria's police counterterrorism operations. An ATA program officer plans to visit Algeria in 2010 to create a training program tailored to Algerian interests and needs. Algeria has tentatively expressed interest in training on preventing international travel by terrorists; disrupting terrorist resources; eliminating physical, cyber, and financial safe havens; and determining terrorists' intentions to develop WMD capabilities, among others. Although USG cooperation with the Algerian police is in its early stages, expansion of NADR ATA activities with Algeria could provide a future venue for joint training among Algeria and TSCTP member countries.